(b) whether their production has registered phenomenal increase;

(c) whether plastic trash is also being dumped in India;

(d) whether Government would consider banning the production, import and use of plastics since they constitute a threat to health and ecology;

(e) if so, by when; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILZIERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) Plastic bags, packaging materials etc. are not eco-hostile. On the contrary these are eco-friendly.

(b) The production of these materials have increased over the years. However, consumption of plastics is still below the world average.

(c) to (f) Government is conscious about potential hazards associated with import of plastic waste/scrap. Vide Public Notice No. 392(PN)/92—97 dated 1.1.97 issued by DGFT, only factory level waste /scrap (which is not put to any use whatsoever and as such can be termed as virgin or new material) will be allowed to be imported for further processing/use by domestic industries and it will be subjected to strict inspection. Other types of waste like municipal waste, post consumer discards etc. will not be allowed to imported. It will neither be possible nor desireable to ban the production and use of plastics as this wonderful materials is both supplementing the range of materials available to meet daily needs of common man at affordable prices with acceptable quality as also substituting natural materia;:, like timber and metals thereby contributing to the preservation of ecology and environment. The increasing use of plastics in the medical services/ procession disproves the theory that plastics are a threat to health.

Working Conditions of Forest Labourers in the country

2923. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any existing machinery at the Central level to monitor the deployment of forest labourers in the country, their working conditions and related matters;

(b) whether any assessment has been made by Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Forest cover in the Country and World Bank sponsored afforestation schemes

2924. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of forest cover, State-wise, of the country as on date;

(b) whether it is a fact that World Bank sponsored afforestation programmes are operational in the country;

(c) if so, the details of such programmes;

(d) whether Government propose to set up forest farmer cooperatives in the country to ensure that timber prices are determined by the farmers; and

(e) if so, by when a decison to that effect is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Percentage of forest cover, Siate-wise of the country is given in Statement-I *(See* below)

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Details of World Bank sponsored afforestation programmes operational in